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ABSTRACT

Wisconsin's school-to-work initiative is being led by citizens representing business and industry, education, organized labor, community groups, and governmental entities from all over the state. They share a vision for improving how students are prepared to become successful citizens, productive workers, and lifelong learners. This booklet describes the use of various partnerships needed to build a local school-to-work system. Lists of suggested activities are presented for education on the elementary, middle and junior high, high school, and postsecondary levels. The booklet also includes background information on school-to-work, Wisconsin's school-to-work model, creating partnerships, and tips on getting started, and roles and activities for various grade levels. (KC)

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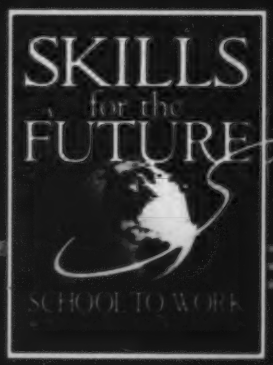

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Creating Local School-to-Work Partnerships

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Introduction

Wisconsin's school-to-work initiative is being led by citizens representing business and industry, education, organized labor, community groups, and governmental entities from all over the state. While these leaders are diverse in many ways, they have one thing in common. They share a vision for improving how we prepare students to become successful citizens, productive workers, and lifelong learners.

That shared vision is the result of the efforts of a variety of people belonging to school-to-work partnerships. These stakeholders make Wisconsin's school-to-work efforts a reality.

School to work requires systemic, collaborative changes to give Wisconsin's young adults the best likelihood of success in the workplace. Implementing school to work is not easy, but it is worth the effort.

This booklet describes the use of various partnerships needed to build a local school-to-work system. Lists of suggested activities are presented for several educational levels. Because each local initiative is unique, partners will want to customize their implementation activities, including adding or deleting activities, to meet local needs.

This booklet also includes background information on school to work, Wisconsin's school-to-work model, creating partnerships, and tips on getting started, and roles and activities for various grade levels.

School to Work

The foundation of a local school-to-work partnership consists of three basic components: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. Each component must be included in the local partnership plan to provide students with an integrated array of learning experiences to form bridges between education and employment.

School-based learning must provide students with opportunities for career awareness and career exploration and counseling beginning at the earliest possible age, instruction and curriculum that integrates academic and vocational learning, a program of study designed to meet challenging academic standards, and regularly scheduled assessments.

Work-based learning uses the workplace as a site for student learning. These instructional programs are school-supervised and structured with formal instructional plans that directly relate students' learning activities in the workplace to their career goals. Work-based learning includes instruction in general workplace competencies. Examples of work-based learning include cooperative education, general work experience, and youth apprenticeship.

Connecting activities are programs or human resources that help link school-based and work-based educational programs. Examples include matching students with work-based opportunities, providing technical assistance to help employers and educators design comprehensive school-to-work systems, encouraging active business involvement in school-based and work-based activities, and linking existing youth development activities with employer and industry strategies to upgrade work skills.

Applied teaching methods, interdisciplinary teaching, and team-teaching are approaches that meet student needs more effectively than some traditional approaches.

Wisconsin's School-to-Work Model

The way we educate students needs to be reevaluated continually to most effectively prepare graduates to compete in today's workplace. If students are going to become successful, independent adults, they need preparation that will aid them on that path. Even though we often do a good job of giving students technical and academic preparation, employers demand additional qualities in their employees. They need employees who have strong academic skills—especially in math, science, and communications. They also want employees who can apply academic learning to the world of work and who can function effectively as part of a team.

Wisconsin's school-to-work initiative prepares students to make meaningful choices about their educational path and career directions. It fosters lifelong learning for students. Wisconsin's school-to-work system is designed to flexibly meet the needs of students as future employees as well as the needs of employers.

School to work should:

- serve all students (including the entire population of students in Wisconsin regardless of sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability *s.118.13 Wis. Stats*);
- be designed and implemented by a broad coalition of community partners;
- provide extensive career awareness and exploration opportunities and assessment;
- integrate academic and occupational learning; and
- provide links between secondary and post-secondary education.

Creating School-to-Work Partnerships

Partnerships must ensure that effective guidance occurs at all stages of a student's learning experience. Wisconsin's model for guidance includes age-appropriate career development activities and experiences for all students. It also recognizes that guidance counselors need the support of other school staff, parents, employers, and other community members to deliver a broad range of career development activities. For example, teachers in the school and mentors in the workplace can guide and counsel students. Students also should be linked with the community services necessary to facilitate learning and promote a successful transition from school to work.

Assistance is crucial within the partnerships. Employers must receive technical assistance in their training efforts and in how they work with youth. For example, employers may require assistance in designing on-the-job learning experiences for students. Schools and employers must cooperate in integrating school-based and work-based experiences in meaningful and effective ways. Partnership participants must also assist in integrating academic and occupational learning. For example, a working partnership can provide students with assistance in finding jobs, continuing their education, or undertaking additional training programs.

Information is essential for continuous improvement of all school-to-work efforts. To improve the school-to-work system, partnerships must gather, interpret, and respond to program data such as post-program results. Similarly, student learning experiences should incorporate employer and industry strategies for skill improvement, as needed.

Activities for School-to-Work Partnerships

- Match students with work-based learning opportunities in industry.
- Provide each student with a school-site mentor to act as a liaison between the student and the employer.
- Provide technical assistance to employers to help them work with youth and to design on-the-job learning experiences.
- Assist schools and employers to integrate school-based and work-based learning and to integrate academic and occupational learning into the program.
- Encourage employers to participate with local education officials in the implementation of local activities.
- Provide assistance to students in finding appropriate jobs, continuing their education, or entering into additional training programs.
- Link participants with other community services that may be necessary to ensure a successful transition from school to work.
- Collect and analyze information regarding the outcomes of participants in the school-to-work program, based on socio-economic status, race, gender ethnicity, culture, and disability, and on whether the participants have limited-English proficiency, are school dropouts, are disadvantaged, or are academically talented.
- Link youth development activities with employer and industry strategies for upgrading the skills of their workers.

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Roles in School to Work

A wide range of participants can play roles in improving the effectiveness of school-to-work systems. Employers, educators, parents, members of labor organizations, and members of other community organizations are critical to program success.

Employers can:

- form partnerships with educators and other interested employers to plan and start school-to-work activities with schools in their community;
- advise teachers on curriculum and special projects;
- help schools develop courses that will prepare students for good jobs;
- conduct tours or provide speakers for local schools;
- provide job shadowing opportunities and work experiences that reinforce and complement classroom learning activities; and
- provide opportunities for educators to learn more about the workplace through externships (working at a business/industry for a short length of time).

Educators can:

- bring colleagues together with employers, labor organizations, parents, and others to plan and implement a school-to-work system in their community;
- learn about and experiment with curriculum based on "real world" work;
- request "how-to" manuals from proven programs in nearby school districts;
- help students become aware of the range of career options they can pursue;
- invest in professional development so that teachers, counselors, and administrators will be prepared to become partners in reforming the local educational system;
- recognize the vital leadership role that counselors must play in building a successful school-to-work system; and
- educate parents and the community on current labor market information on a regular basis.

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Parents can:

- let educators, civic organizations, and others know of their interest in creating a school-to-work system in the community;
- volunteer to help build the system and keep it going at all levels;
- urge employers to provide work experience opportunities for students;
- volunteer to be a mentor or supervisor in the workplace;
- help children understand the relationships between learning and earning, and the similarities between working at school and paid work; and
- encourage local schools and employers to recognize and reward high achievement.

Members of labor organizations can:

- collaborate with state and local officials, employers, and schools to design a local school-to-work system;
- mobilize local unions to offer high-quality training and meaningful work experiences to students and teachers involved in school-to-work activities;
- become mentors in the workplace; and
- educate labor organizations about school-to-work through the local education officials in the union.

Members of community organizations can:

- collaborate with state and local officials, employers, parents, and schools to design a local school-to-work system that reaches all youth, including dropouts;
- work with educators and employers to ensure opportunities for women, racial minorities, and persons with disabilities to participate in school-to-work activities;
- work with employers and school personnel to insure opportunities for students from high-poverty areas or low-income families and/or who may have low achievement levels or limited English proficiency;
- coordinate local employers, schools, and parents to help establish working partnerships;
- mobilize support for students most at risk of failing or dropping out of school; and
- volunteer to work in the schools.

Getting Started

A broad coalition of community partners governs successful school-to-work initiatives. Public schools, technical colleges, universities, employers, workers, organized labor, students, parents, community groups, and government groups should be involved in planning school-to-work initiatives. The needs and standards of business and industry are central to implementing local programs. A school district's strategic plan serves as the basis for school-to-work efforts.

Partners will need help in creating a vision of school-to-work and how it complements the school district's strategic plan. Orientation and training is critical for all partners. In many cases, especially for school personnel, job descriptions will need to be developed or revised to reflect school-to-work responsibilities.

Successful school-to-work initiatives begin by aligning curriculum among K-12 schools, technical colleges, and universities. The result is a more effective use of students' time. Alignment also helps students relate what is learned in school to what is required in the workplace. Alignment should include articulation and cooperative agreements between secondary and post-secondary institutions and may involve granting credit. These agreements link curriculum so students make a smooth transition from one level to another without delay, duplication of courses, or loss of credit.

Suggested Activities for Getting Started

- Identify and solicit involvement of key partners from education, business, organized labor, government entities, and community groups.
- Develop an understanding of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 and learn about other school-to-work systems.
- Develop an implementation plan based on the school district's strategic plan.
- Determine organizational structure and establish a board of directors or steering committee.
- Initiate articulation and cooperative agreements with post-secondary schools.
- Develop agreements that outline the responsibilities and expectations of all partners.
- Develop a marketing plan for the promotion of school to work in the community.
- Explore funding sources and submit grant proposals.
- Promote the formation of partnerships among schools and local businesses.

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School to Work at the Elementary School Level

At the elementary school level, students should develop an awareness of what it means to "work" and should gain an understanding that people perform fundamentally different types of work.

Every school site needs a team that will promote, develop, guide, implement, and assess school-to-work activities. School to work requires a significant change in how teachers, counselors, and administrators think and work. A local school site committee should be charged with helping school personnel implement and sustain the effort. Every site team should coordinate its efforts with a district-wide team to ensure that efforts are a logical part of a developmentally-appropriate scope and sequence of learning experiences. Additionally, middle and high school teachers can serve as resources to elementary school staff.

Career development should be based upon Wisconsin's Developmental Guidance Model to encourage students to build a solid foundation for school-to-work. Beginning in elementary school, students should participate in systematic career development activities. Learning activities should help students understand what it means to "work." Children need to begin to recognize the common characteristics of all productive human endeavor-characteristics such as decision making, conflict management, teamwork, and goal-setting. These same characteristics form the basis of the competencies included in the Developmental Guidance Model. While the bulk of work awareness activity can occur in the classroom, students can benefit by job-site visits, school-based enterprises, and school visits by people from various businesses or industries.

Teachers at all levels must have firsthand knowledge of the workplace. For teachers to relate classroom learning to work, they must observe and participate in business and industry. Students can benefit from teachers who experience industry practices as externs, for example. Teachers must also be prepared to help youngsters understand how school is similar to the work people do in paid jobs.

Staff development should enable teachers and counselors to provide the foundation for subsequent school-to-work activities. Once development activities are established at the elementary level, the process of infusing applied learning activities into the curriculum will be easier.

Parents are essential partners in the school-to-work system. Parents must participate in their children's career development experiences. When parents are actively involved in their young children's career development and when those career development experiences represent a contemporary interpretation of skills for the future, students' options are broadened. Parents can arrange for teacher and counselor business internships or shadowing experiences, and may assist in making arrangements for students to visit businesses.

Suggested Activities for Kindergarten through Fifth Grade Level

- Develop a site committee in each school to guide and assess school-to-work activities.
- Provide school-to-work in-service training and professional development for teachers, counselors, and other school personnel.
- Integrate self-awareness and work-awareness into curriculum.
- Ensure that some career development activities call for involvement of parents or guardians.
- Provide workplace learning experiences such as externships, job shadowing, cooperative education, youth apprenticeships, plant tours, and the like for students, teachers, and parents.
- Use the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model competencies and elementary level indicators as a framework for comprehensive, curriculum-based career development.

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School to Work at the Middle School Level

Students in middle school should gain further understanding of themselves and work, including what it means to work, types of work activity and occupations, individual work preferences, and how to prepare for careers.

Middle school students need additional development experiences in authentic work. These experiences, organized around the Developmental Guidance Model competency framework, become even more crucial at the middle school level. Students need to be able to recognize that these competencies and the application of knowledge are common characteristics of all work. At the same time, students need activities that help them differentiate types of work. Work experiences (inside and outside the classroom) will help students focus on the type of work they prefer.

Interest inventories and student assessment activities can help students gain self- and work-awareness so they start planning their education and set goals. Interest inventories and other career assessment tools, used as part of a comprehensive career awareness program, can help students focus on occupational areas that fit their interests and aptitudes.

Students should develop portfolios in order to facilitate lifework planning experiences. Portfolios are designed to enable students to manage information about themselves and the world of work so they can develop meaningful goals and viable educational plans. Portfolios can be viewed as database-like tools students create and maintain for themselves. The student uses the portfolio to promote reflection and to document personal aptitudes, assessments, interests, learning styles, experiences, competency attainment, and so forth. Students and others can use the information from this evolving database to plan educational and other life experiences.

Middle school graduates should use tentative post-secondary goals as a basis for making informed high school educational planning decisions. All beginning high school students ought to have goals that are meaningful and motivating. Such goals will require self-awareness, knowledge about the work world, and the ability to make informed decisions. Having begun to crystallize thinking around such goals, students will be able to create personally meaningful educational plans.

As at the elementary level, educators should establish a site committee, implement a staff development program, encourage parental involvement, and develop knowledge of the workplace.

Suggested Activities for Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grades

- Develop a site committee in each school to guide and assess school-to-work activities.
- Provide school-to-work in-service training and professional development activities for teachers, counselors, and other school personnel.
- Ensure that teachers vary the type of work students are asked to do inside and outside the classroom to help learners determine the type of work they prefer.
- Use developmental guidance competencies as a framework to infuse self-awareness and work-awareness in all curricular experiences.
- Provide in-service training for employers related to work site visits such as tours and job shadowing.
- Initiate or continue the use of portfolios for all students to facilitate career development.
- Ensure parents receive information about and participate in what their children are learning about themselves and work.
- Provide workplace learning experiences such as externships, job shadowing, plant tours, career fairs and the like for students, teachers, and parents.

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School to Work at the High School Level

School-to-work efforts at the high school level should focus on refining students' tentative goals and giving students the tools necessary for achieving those goals.

Academic and vocational courses should work hand-in-hand. Students will benefit from applying academic concepts to vocational situations. Similarly, using vocational examples can help make academics more meaningful for students.

Just as important as academic and technical skills are the general workplace competencies required in today's high-performance workplace. These competencies include critical thinking, decision-making, computer literacy, interpersonal communications, teamwork, and total quality management skills. General workplace skills are not "subjects" to be taught in an isolated setting. Instead, they should be integrated into all learning and modeled by teachers and other school staff.

Work-based learning is an important part of a school-to-work system. Ideally, students pursue work-based learning experiences at a work site and under the guidance of a workplace mentor. However, such experiences can take place in the school through school-based enterprises, simulations, or special projects. The key in both cases is industry involvement in designing and implementing each student's work-based learning experience. The goal of such experiences is for students to further develop specific technical competencies and general workplace competencies.

Articulation and cooperative agreements between secondary and post-secondary institutions facilitate the school-to-work initiative. These agreements eliminate duplication of course content between technical colleges, colleges and universities, and public schools. These agreements provide high school students the opportunity to earn college credit.

Counselors/teachers should work to make their students' transition to post-secondary education seamless. Teachers must help students connect career interests with post-secondary opportunities. Teachers and their students should also discuss the application process, existing articulation agreements, and opportunities for financial aid.

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Schools should partner with community service providers to ensure that student needs are met. While students are learning, they may have special or ongoing needs that require the assistance of local (or state) service providers. Schools and service organizations can work together so that student needs do not interfere with learning experiences.

Strong academics are vital to ensure student success in the workplace. School to work calls for the elimination of the "general academic" track. Employers today need workers who can communicate effectively, solve complex problems, understand the underlying scientific principles of technology, and who are prepared for lifelong learning.

Applied courses in math, science, and communications benefit students who learn best with a hands-on approach. Applied academics—a hands-on, contextual approach to teaching academic subjects—help students see the relevance of what they are learning. Studies show that learning academics in an applied way can greatly improve student interest, retention, and achievement.

Employers demand workers who possess workplace competencies in addition to academic and technical skills. As at earlier levels, teachers should incorporate employability skills in their curricula. Teachers should also make the connection between classroom behaviors and attitude and what is expected on the job, such as punctuality, attendance, meeting deadlines, and so forth.

Portfolios are a lifelong, student-managed collection of achievements and progress toward career goals. Beginning in the ninth grade, each student should start compiling a portfolio. The portfolio can form the basis for career planning and development.

The student, parent, and teacher/advisor should periodically review the plan of study/career map. In addition, an interest inventory and aptitude assessment should be done by the 10th grade to reaffirm the student's initial plans.

Career sampling allows students to apply what they learn in school. To make meaningful connections between school and work, students need to understand that what they learn in school is relevant to the workplace.

Teachers must work together for the benefit of students. Academic and vocational teachers can make concepts relevant to students by determining how students can work as a team to connect a concept with its real-work

applications. Administrators must find ways to allow time for teachers to plan these team activities.

As with the elementary level and middle school levels, high school level educators should establish a site committee, implement a staff development program, encourage parental involvement, and develop personal knowledge of the workplace.

Suggested Activities for Ninth and Tenth Grades

- Develop a site committee in each school to guide and assess school-to-work activities.
- Provide school-to-work in-service training and professional development activities for teachers, counselors, and other school personnel.
- Provide a system for frequent parental contact, communication, and decision-making.
- Align academic and vocational curriculum with state and national industry-validated competency/task lists.
- Integrate general workplace competencies into the wider curriculum.
- Provide adequate time for staff development and team planning and interaction.
- Integrate academic and vocational curricula.
- Review and revise plans of study/career maps as needed.
- Develop a process for screening and admitting students to work-based learning programs.
- Initiate or continue use of student portfolios.
- Provide in-service training for employers related to career sampling opportunities.
- Provide workplace learning experiences such as externships, job shadowing, plant tours, career fairs, and the like for students, teachers, and parents.

Suggested Activities for Eleventh and Twelfth Grades

- Develop a site committee in each school to guide and assess school-to-work activities.
- Provide school-to-work in-service and professional development activities for teachers, counselors, and other school personnel.
- Align K-12, academic, vocational, and post-secondary curricula.
- Integrate applied academics into vocational programs.
- Integrate vocational examples into academic classrooms.
- Integrate general workplace competencies into the wider curriculum.
- Continue to initiate articulation and cooperative agreements.
- Ensure that role and responsibility agreements are in place for administrators (academic and vocational), parents, school-to-work coordinators, mentors, and school-site mentors.
- Establish curriculum integration among school programs of study and work sites.
- Enhance linkages among after-school, weekend, and summer jobs; career exploration; and school-based learning.
- Provide in-service training for employers related to career sampling opportunities and work site mentoring.
- Provide supplementary and support services such as child care and transportation, as needed, so all students may participate.
- Review and revise plans of study/career maps as needed.
- Provide workplace learning experiences such as teacher externships, cooperative education, youth apprenticeship, job shadowing, plant tours, and the like for students, teachers, and parents.
- Initiate or develop communications with higher education institutions to provide a seamless experience for students moving to post secondary programs.
- Provide job placement assistance to students.

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School-to-Work Connections at the Post-Secondary Level

A student's transition from high school to post-secondary education should be seamless. Communication and cooperation among secondary and post-secondary educators will make post-secondary schooling a continuation of the learning experience, rather than an interruption or change in direction.

Some barriers to student success can be eliminated by providing supplementary and support services. For example, the availability of child care, transportation, and other support services can affect student success. Without needed support services, students may not be able to participate fully, or at all.

Business and industry partners continue to be a critical part of the school-to-work initiative at the post-secondary level. Relationships with business and industry at the post-secondary level may expand to include tuition assistance and curriculum alignment for professional careers. Business and industry should also help determine seminar and short-course offerings.

Learning is a lifelong process. Changes in technology, knowledge, and practice ensure that workers will be required to keep learning and growing throughout their careers. A school-to-work initiative must accommodate this need for lifelong learning.

Many of the activities implemented at the secondary level will apply to the post-secondary experience. **As with the elementary level, post-secondary educators should establish a site committee, implement a staff development program, encourage parental involvement, and develop personal knowledge of the workplace.**

For more information about school to work or to receive related resources, contact the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, School-to-Work Team at the address noted at the front of this publication.

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